5

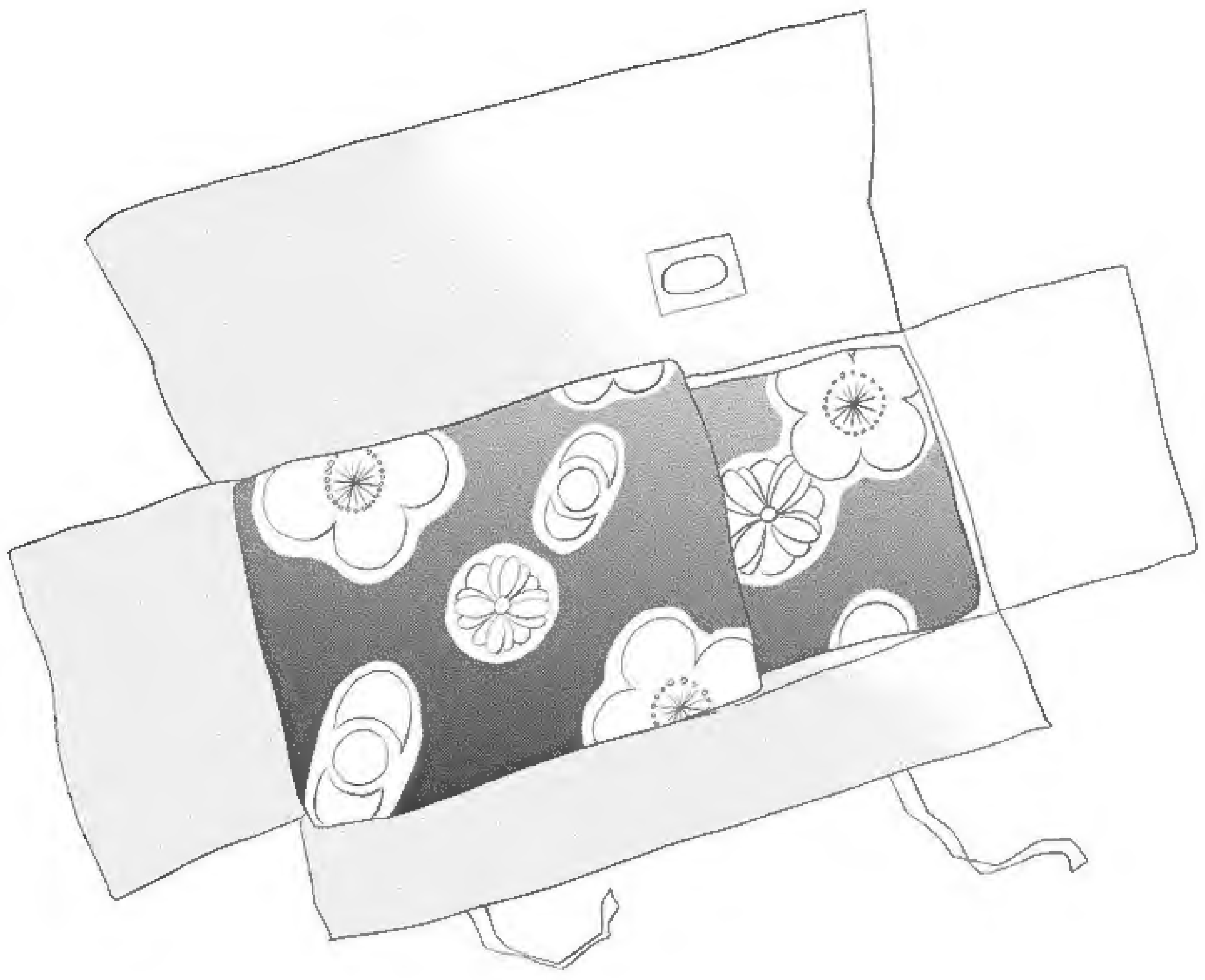
HOUSE of the SUN

Taamo

HOUSE of the SUN

5

by Taamo



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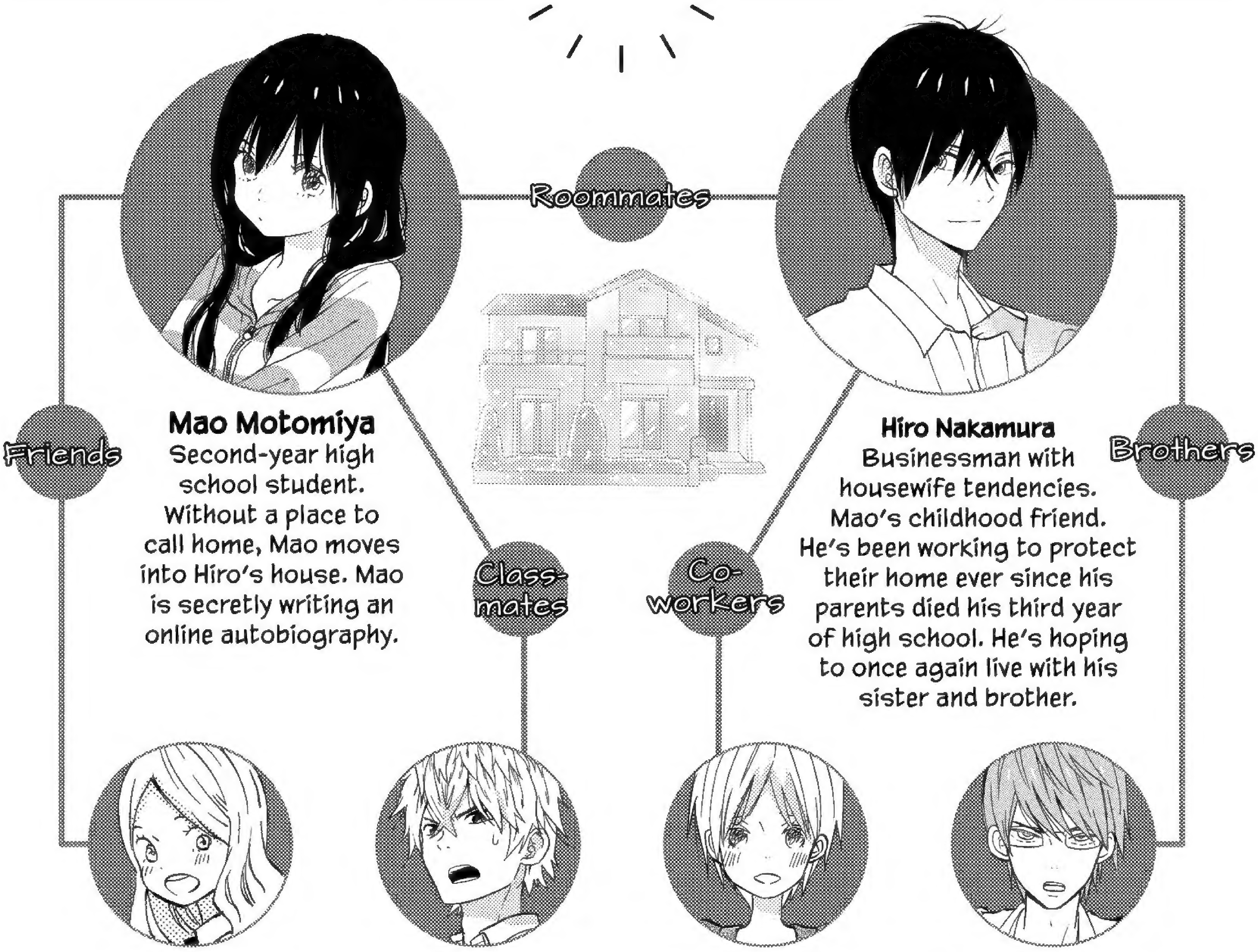
CHARACTER



Mao Motomiya
Second-year high school student. Without a place to call home, Mao moves into Hiro's house. Mao is secretly writing an online autobiography.

Hiro Nakamura
Businessman with housewife tendencies. Mao's childhood friend. He's been working to protect their home ever since his parents died his third year of high school. He's hoping to once again live with his sister and brother.

Chi-chan (Chihiro)
Mao's friend, who is in a different class. She likes Oda-kun.

Oda-kun
Mao's classmate since first year. He confessed his love to Mao and got rejected, but he isn't giving up.

Sugimoto-san
Hiro's coworker. She's a fan of Mao's novel. Her nickname is "Radical." She likes Hiro.

Daiki Nakamura
Hiro's little brother. In his second year of high school. He moved in with an uncle after their parents died. He has similar tastes as Mao.

STORY

After her father gets remarried, Mao feels like she no longer has a home and ends up moving in with Hiro, her childhood friend.

Mao falls in love with Hiro, who is kind and takes care of her.

Aiming to become self-reliant, she gets a part-time job with Daiki, who is home for summer break.

Hiro's been acting strange, and so, at the fireworks festival, Mao inadvertently ends up asking him if he likes her!

Volume Five.
I hope you enjoy it.

-Taamo

story 17

A Boy's Feelings

Hiro...
Do you...
...like me?
Like that?
ドドン
BOOM
ドンッ
BOOM
ドンッ
BOOM

...
N...
Never mind what I just said!
Don't answer, or I'll get mad!
Mao...

BOOM
BOOM
I didn't hear you.
...
BOOM
...
Mao.
Just forget it!
I'm sorry for asking such a weird question!

It's impossible right now, anyway...
...
*Jumbo skewers
*Yakisoba
Hiro.
Mao.

Daiki?
Are you all done?
Did you behave yourselves?
What?
GROWL
Oh, my stomach!
Hey.
Cotton candy won't fill you up.
Want some *yakisoba?
I'll buy some.
Did something happen?
...
Things are coming out of her.
Three orders of yakisoba, please.
Sure. That'll be *1500 yen.

*Candied apricot

*Fried noodles

*Approximately $15.00

It's impossible right now, anyway...
It's true.
Those...
...words...
...just poured out...
...inadvertently.
Even I'm...
...not sure...
...that I'm in my right mind.

BOOM ドン
BOOM ドンッ
B-BOOM ドドンッ
Wow! Amazing!
Ama-zing!
BOOM ドン
BOOM ドーン
It's amazing, right?
So don't have such a bored expression on your face.
Huh? I'm not bored!
But if I look bored, it must be 'cause I'm with you.
No! I didn't mean to say that!
Idiot! Idiot! I'm such an idiot!
You're the one who invited me, you know?
Oh... I guess you would've preferred to come with the guy you like.

You like the same guy as Motomiya, right?
I... I...
Well, eat this, and cheer up!
It's delicious.
Huh?
Half eaten.
ガブッ
CHOMP
I took a bite...
もぐもぐ
MUNCH MUNCH
Was that the end of the fireworks? Shall we go?
And he's still eating it!
Can you stand?
Of course I can!

Come on! You idiot!
Be straight-forward!
I can't stand up.
*Yukata are so much trouble.
HOP
とん
...
There are...
She looks...
...really troubled, too...
...so many...
...people here.

*Summer kimono

But there's only one person...
...I truly want to be with.
Even if I end up crying...
All I wish for is...
あんず飴
Candied apricot
200円
...that person's happiness.
あんず飴
コーラ
すもも
あんず
メロン
みかん
フル
Candied apricot

*200 Yen Approximately $2.00

Th-
Thanks for taking me home.
It's gonna rain tomorrow if you're this nice to me!
Good night.
Uh...
Um...
Huh?
ぎゅっ
CLENCH
You may not have really wanted to go with me today...
...but, I...

I'm really happy I got to go with you.
H...hey, what's with you?
Go with the guy you like next time, okay?
Actually, today...
You made that happen for me.
Huh?
CLENCH

I like you, Oda-kun!
Waaah!
ぶわっ
SOB
What?
H... hey.
Are you okay?
I like you.

ギィ
CREAK
バタン
SLAM
Good night.
Huh?
I thought she liked the same guy as Motomiya!
What does this mean?
Huh?

We're home!
Oh, Croquette, you missed us!
I'm sorry! We're home now.
There, there.
There, there.
きゅんきゅん
きゅんきゅん
YAP
YAP
YAP
YAP
My feet...
My feet feel strange! Like I'm stepping on something!
バタ THUD
バタ THUD
バタ THUD
バタ THUD
Was that your first time wearing *geta* sandals?
Yeah.
What do I do now?
It'll pass in a bit.
Oh, okay.
That's right.
This was...
...my first time wearing a *yukata*...
...and going to a fireworks festival with everyone.

Everything tonight was a first for me.
Thank you.
I hope we can all go with Hina-chan, too, next year.
Mao just keeps saying things like that,
huh, Croquette?
PANT PANT
PANT PANT
But it's how I really feel.
Yeah.

I hope you get to go with your father, Mao.
NOD
Oh, Hina responded to my message.
BZZ BZZ BZZ BZZ BZZ BZZ
I asked if she could come home for the *Bon holiday.
...
...

*Bon is a major Buddhist holiday in Japan.

D-Daiki, let's play Chon-mame!
!!
What are you saying?!
Your hair is long enough for a topknot!
Me? No, you do it!
As I expected...
Hina...
...has been back...
...
Hiro.

Inbox
Frm Hina
Sub

I visited the grave already.
I'm not coming home.

I don't want to move back home.
I won't move back.
The truth is, we ran into Hina.
...
Where?
At the fireworks festival.
...
I see.
Is she doing well?
Yes.

Did she say she doesn't want to come home?
Yeah.
SIT
むく

...
GULP
ぐび
Hiro.
Mao...
You can't sleep?
Yeah.
Can I sit next to you?
No.

I'm sitting down anyway!
どかっ
FLOP
How dare you!
I'll pounce on you!
Woah! You're drunk! Gross!
You would never do that!
うぐ
ARGH
Ah!
!!
ポスッ
PLUNK
Damn it, Hina!

She's choosing to make it harder for herself.
She just keeps trying to take everything on herself...
...and is too damn stubborn to come home.
She's in pain?
Yes!
That idiot!
Yeah, she's an idiot.
You want her to come back so badly.

Is it because I'm here...
...that Hina won't come back?
Huh?
Not at all. It's her problem.
But...
...even with me around...
...it will never fill the void in Hiro's heart.
Thank you for everything, Hiro.
It's okay.
I'm sure that Hina-chan understands.

Ever since...
...I started living here...
...I've learned so many things.
Family is a good thing, after all.
It's all thanks to you, Hiro.
Hiro...
You're waiting for Hina-chan.
It's going to be okay.

Mao.
RUB
Thank you.
Let's go to sleep.
O-okay.
Good night, Hiro.
バタン
SLAM
...
That was dangerous.

What?! You told Oda-kun you like him?
Yeah... He hasn't responded to me yet, though.
I know that he likes you...
So I've been too scared to ask.
...
I can't go on like this!
That's why I told him in the first place!
But!

I'm gonna do my best so that he starts to like me.
SIT
ストッ
Chi-chan, you're amazing.
I also inadvertently asked Hiro if he likes me at the fireworks festival.
What?! How? What did he say?
It's impossible right now, anyway.
No matter how he answers me now, I'm sure he won't be able to without sympathy and other feelings getting in the way.
That's why I asked him to let me take it back.

What?! What are you talking about, Mao?
It's fine if he's sympathetic.
When the person you like likes you back...
...that's a great thing.
I don't know how he feels yet.
Yes, you do! He definitely likes you! It would be weird if he didn't!
At any rate, I need to at least move out of that house.
I want Hina-chan to move back home.
I see...
Yeah.
It's decided.

Okay!
My mom has a friend who does property management. I can ask him.
If I find a good place, I'll let you know right away.
I don't know if it'll go over well for a high school girl to live on her own.
It's dangerous.
Thank you, Chi-chan!
I'll look for a place, too.
Ah, ah.
You're welcome.
Ah...
I feel kind of like a young maiden...
It's embarrassing.
Yeah.
MUNCH MUNCH
MUNCH MUNCH
You need to be set free, or you'll die.

Thank you for your patronage!
This way, please.
Oh, my mistake!
ぐちゃあ
MESSY
What are you doing? This way!
My apologies!
This way please!
That's all right.
I am obliged to you, Master Daiki!
It's fine, get back to work.
He-he-he. I heard all about it, Mao-chan.
ニヤニヤ
GIGGLE GIGGLE GIGGLE GIGGLE
?

You're dating Nakamura-kun, right?
What?
You mean... Daiki? Why would you... Are you... joking?
My friend saw you two at the fireworks festival.
What?

You always leave together, too.
And whisper together.
And call each other by your first names. And you're super friendly, too.
There's no need to hide it.
Waaah! You're totally right!
Of course you'd get the wrong idea!
I knew it.
Why did you say that?
Waaah! Daiki! Everyone thinks we're dating!
We're not dating.

WAAAH
うわあああ
Stop talking nonsense and get back to work.
But...
CLUNK
ガショ
ガショ
CLUNK
It might be better if people think we're dating.
A draft beer, please.
Coming right up!
It could be worse for Daiki if they knew we lived together.
CLUNK
ガチャ
ガチャ
CLUNK
Daiki... Maybe it's best to let them think we're dating.
What?

It was just a thought, but forget it!
If someone got a crush on you...
...or if you got a crush on someone, that would turn out bad.
うわあああ
WAAAH
Be quiet! What are you mumbling about, anyway?
Daiki, is there someone you like?
Oh.
Huh?
...
...

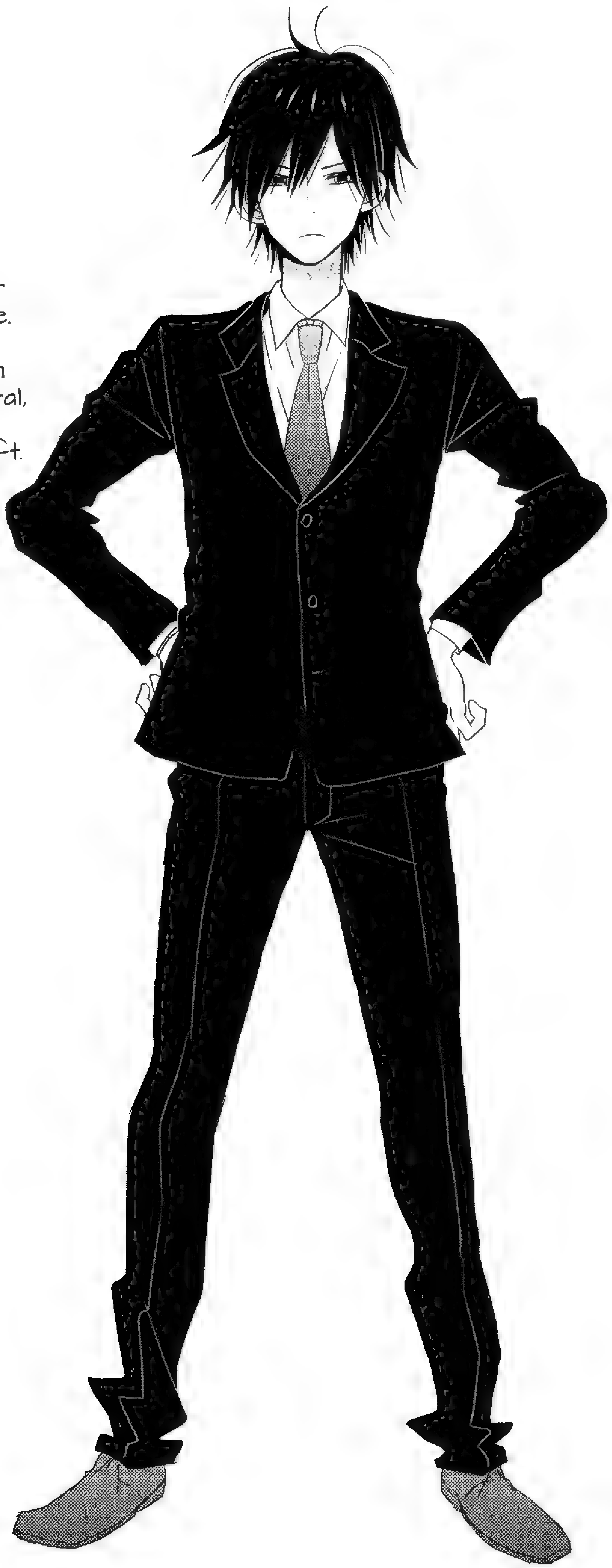
I just remembered you're going back after summer break.
You'll be quitting this job, so it doesn't matter what people think.
You're in quite a state today.
Are you going to continue working here?
Huh?
Yeah...
I want to save money and move out as soon as possible.
You're gonna leave Hiro by himself?
...
Ah...

There's no need for you to leave yet.
Don't be in such a rush.
Also, I've been thinking.
Huh?
I might...
...move home soon.

I want to draw
Hiro in a jacket,
so I can't wait for
winter to get here.

I tried drawing him
here. It's fully digital,
but it took me a
while for the draft.

So I wonder if
I should just do
the drafts analog.
I'm so confused!



Jealousy

What?
You'll be coming back?
Really? So we can work together again?
Happy face.
Correct. So there's no need to throw me a going-away party.
But we already put in an order for a cake at the bar.
A cake?
Sounds more like a celebration.
Not at all! We'll miss you!
Well, you'd better hurry up and cancel the order.
But it's the bar we're going to tonight.
...
You decided on today without consulting me?

Daiki is telling other people that he's coming back.
That means he really...
He really intends to come back.
Hiro...
...will be happy.
I feel like something's changed inside Daiki since he's been living with Hiro this month.
Mao.
FLINCH
びくっ
Are you trying to hide?
Seems that reservations have been made and everyone is going out to eat. You wanna come, too?

Um...
It's my day to make dinner.
Come.
It'll be fine if you just text Hiro.
Y... yeah...
I'll text him, too.
I'll copy what you write.
Why?
'Cause you can write in a way that won't make him mad.
I'll write one that'll make him mad, then
What?!
にや にや にや
GIGGLE GIGGLE GIGGLE
にや にや
GIGGLE GIGGLE
にや
GIGGLE
What is it?
にや にや
GIGGLE GIGGLE
What?
I told you that's not how it is!
Oh?
Sounds like a cover-up to me.

Inbox
○ Frm Daiki
○ Sub Going-away party.
They're throwing me a going-away party today, so I'm going out.
It's Mao's day to make dinner, but I'm taking her to the party, so can you make yourself dinner or get takeout?
Aren't you glad you won't have to eat Mao's cooking?
Inbox
○ Frm Mao
○ Sub Going-away party.
They're throwing Daiki a going-away party today, so I'm going out.
It's my day to make dinner, but I want to go to the party, so can you make yourself dinner or get takeout?
I'm sorry you won't be able to eat my cooking.
HOW CLOSE ARE THEY?!
Won't people be drinking at a going-away party?
Well, I guess Daiki will be there, so I don't need to worry.
TAP カタ
TAP カタ
Everybody, we're having a celebration tonight.
うーす
MUMBLING
Let's go drinking! I hope Sugimoto-san comes, too! You going, Nakamura?
I don't think we have a choice.

Works out perfectly, actually.
I've got a party, too...
TAP TAP
カチカチ
Why am I writing the same text to both of them?
居酒屋
旬楽
Wow! This fish looks good!
I want some horned turban liver!
We'll get food poisoning
Don't say something ominous!
Oh, did the manager trap Sugimoto-san? Is she okay?
Woah! He's getting her drunk!
Oh... Oh...
That's sexual harassment!

*Shunraku

Drink with us, Sugimoto-san!
GULP
You're a strong drinker.
Shall I get you another one?
Yes, please!
That doesn't look good...
Not at all.
Hey, guys, back off.
Don't get her too drunk.
What was that?
Nakamura-kun is giving us a hard time.
Hey! Let's drink, Nakamura!
Okay.
Come over here and drink with me.
Okay!
TMP
TMP
Hey! Don't steal her away!

ストッ
THUD
Sugimoto-san!
Glasses-guy! Let's drink!
Huh? Oh, yeah, I wear glasses.
She's super drunk!
ぐびっ
GULP
She sure is.
That's enough, Sugimoto-san. Drink some of this now.
ぐびっ
GULP
It's water!
ダンッ
THUNK
It's alcohol.
It's water!

Fine. I'll order a drink myself.
The Battle of Yamazaki! *Chugoku Ogaeshi!!
I want this! "Yamazaki"!
That was a sudden burst... Are you a fan of the civil war era?
I am! ♥
Nakamura, do you like *Akechi? do you like history?
How did we get here?
I only know what I've seen on *Taiga.
Here. Have some water. Not the Yamazaki! Drink up.
...
Nakamura-san, when is your birthday?
You really do blurt things out. It's in May.
How old are you?
24.
Me, too!
What? You're younger than me! No way!
Oh, is that so? I'm surprised, too.
Hey! Party's over, guys!

* Refers to a series of military actions taken by Hashiba Hideyoshi after Oda Nobunaga was forced to kill himself at the hands of Akechi Mitsuhide in 1582.

*Akechi Mitsuhide was a samurai and general during the Sengoku Period in Japan

*Taiga was historical fiction television drama series in Japan

WOBBLE
WOBBLE
WOBBLE
Want to go bar-hopping, Sugimoto-san?
Yes!
Hey, don't tease her.
Hey, Nakamura.
Take her home in a taxi.
You're going in the same direction, right?
Is that so? Where does Sugimoto-san live?
I'll look up her address. Hold on.
Hey! You're taking her home, huh? ♪
It's not like that!
...
This is troublesome.

Hello.
Are you out having fun, too?
...
Why did you answer Daiki's phone?
Daiki is busy right now!
I called because I was worried. Why are you so agitated?
THE 退職
They just brought out the cake!
Not bad.
It's super cute!
THE 退職
Oh, right. I have something to tell you!
But I think Daiki will want to tell you first, so look forward to it!
Tell me what? You have to tell me now! I want to know!

*THE RETIREMENT

Hey, Mao.
Sugimoto-san got drunk and can't walk properly, so I'm taking her home. I'll be late.
Huh?
Uh, okay.
What did Hiro say?
He's gonna be late 'cause he's taking a drunk girl from work home.
ダン!
BANG
Stop hitting the cake.

...san.
You...
Please.
Sugimoto-san!
Yes!
Huh?
Oh?
Nakamura-san?

We're here.
Is this the right place?
Huh?
Oh...
Yes, it's here.
I'll see you.
Huh...
Oh!
Um...
Yeah?
Will you come in for some tea?
Thanks, but I'll take this cab home.

I see.
Good-bye.
ペコ
BOW
Thank you.
WOBBLE
フラ
WOBBLE
フラ
フラ
WOBBLE
ヘラ
WOBBLE
Oh!
What's with her?
Where's your door?

Nakamura-san...
...is...
...touching me.
ドッ THUMP
ドッ THUMP
ドッ THUMP
ドッ THUMP
ドッ THUMP
ドッ THUMP
Is that my heartbeat?
Um... Here is fine!
Thank you!

Bye.
Good night.
Oh.
Um...
301 杉本
Will you stay a little longer?
I want to talk with you.

I guess...
I invited him in!
I...
I'm so nervous, I'm shaking...
...you can't?
But I have to talk to him about Kukai-san.
And not just that...
I want to...
...spend more time alone with him.

I'm sorry. My brother will be going back to our uncle's place soon.
I want to spend as much time as possible with him until then.
We'll hang out after he leaves.
Good night.
Good...
...night.

If it means getting hurt...
I'd rather never fall in love.
That's...
...what...
...I always thought.

But it's fine if I get hurt.
I want to talk with him more...!
I want to get to know him.
I want to be near him.
I'm becoming...
...selfish.

I feel kind of bad.
Did she really want to talk about history that much?
She was pretty drunk.
But I don't think I'd have much to say.
I wonder if those guys are home yet?
カパ
FWAP
Hello? Daiki?

Hiro?
Are you all done?
Anyway, I'm on my way home now.
Okay.
You're being quite dismissive.
You know...
What are you talking about?
Mao said you told her you were up to no good.
I never said that!
I decided to move back home.

Really?
You really mean it?
I mean it.
I wouldn't joke about this.
Thank you,
Daiki.
Don't thank me just for returning home. That's weird.

But...
I'm so happy.
Thank you.
Even Hina might change her mind now.
Then all of us...
...can live together again.

You're late!
CURRY POWDER
Where's Daiki?
He went to sleep.
He was waiting up for you, but he couldn't stop yawning.
Were you waiting for me, Mao?
No way!
I was cooking!
Daiki is leaving us for a little while.
We should give him a grand send-off.

We can make it his welcome home party, too.
Thank you, Mao.
It's nothing.
H... Hiro.
Yeah?
Was your coworker okay?
Yeah, she sobered up a little. She's fine.
I was worried.
Like, a lot.

There's nothing for you to worry about.
I'll help.
Should I peel this?
Y... yes.
...
TUG
TUG
ぐ"
ぐ"
I'm so happy about Daiki.
Maybe Hina-chan will change her mind, too.
That would be nice.
ダ"
CHOP
ダ"
CHOP
ダ"
CHOP

It would be lively with all four of us.
And we have Croquette, too.
ダッ
CHOP
Don't include me!
Be careful.
Why not?
...
Yeah... You're right.
Staying here isn't what would make you the happiest.
I always used to put your happiness first...
But I started thinking about myself more lately.

I want you to stay here.
ぼじゃ FWOOSH
ぼじゃ FWOOSH
ぼじゃ FWOOSH
カレー
That's too much.
Chi-chan said to add in this much.
You shouldn't trust Chi-chan.

I always thought...
...I was the only one...
...who...
...felt happy because of Hiro.
I'm so sleepy. I can't keep my eyes open.
ゴツン BONK
You're heavy!
Why don't you go to sleep?
Yeah... But I'm worried about your cooking.

So you're home, huh?
びく
JOLT
I...I'm home.
Don't sneak up on us.
What are you doing?
We're cooking!
I got sleepy and was using Mao as a pillow.

Hmph.
Whatever, it's fine.
Like I said on the phone, I plan to move back here.
But I can't do so right away.
I have to talk to our uncle about it.
Yeah.
I was planning on talking to him, too.
Well, I should go pay my respects, at least.
I'll let you know when the time comes.

All right.
It'll just be the two of you until I move back.
Don't do anything to get yourself arrested, okay?
Huh? What are you talking about?
That's right! Mao isn't 18 yet!
It's nothing. Just a joke.
What's wrong?
It's nothing.
Good night.

*Good-bye and see you soon, Daiki.
大樹さようならそしておかえりなさい
パ
POP
パチ CLAP
パチ CLAP
パチ CLAP
What is this?
チュン CHIRP
チュン CHIRP
What do you mean?! It's a party!
It's a "good-bye and see you soon" party!
パン
POP
Did you make this last night?
And those circles under your eyes... Were you up all night?
I wasn't expecting it to take all night...

This isn't edible! It's an insult to food!
There's no need to go to such lengths!
でろぉ…
GLOOP
I'm sure it's delicious!
Here, try it.
I'm not doing that.
ガッガッ
SHOVE
Mao's having a nervous breakdown from pulling an all-nighter.
First all-nighter.
No matter how many times you try, you'll never get it right! Just accept it!
Like how you'll never be good at video games?
Exactly.

Just try one more bite.
No. I swear I won't.
...
You two sure get along well.
No way!

All right, I'm off.
Take care of yourself.
Call if you need anything.
Don't play video games too much.
Say hi to our relatives for me.
You sound like a mom!
Mao.
Come here. Come here.
...

What are you doing?
What did you tell her?
Nothing.
Bye.
It was nothing.
...
Huh?
Okay.
ふぁ YAWN
I'm sleepy.
It's finally just us two now, so I can get some sleep.
What?
Just us two?

story 19 Just Us Two

Just...
...us two?
But we spent time with just the two of us even when Daiki was here...!
And it was just the two of us when I first moved in...!
BADUMP ドキ
BADUMP ドキ
There's nothing for me to get worked up about...!
BADUMP ドキ
BADUMP ドキ
Hiro's acting normal, too...
YAWN ふあ
ふっつー
NORMAL
GRRR
ムッカー

ドカッ
WHACK
Ouch!
What's with you?
Let's clean up!
Why did she hit me?
MESSY
ぐちゃあ‥
So...
When can I get some sleep?
Let's clean up first.
Okay!
A...agh.
It's too high.
Daiki, can you get this?

Daiki just left.
Oh, right!
I can get it!
I'm the one who put it up.
Sorry... It's just that Daiki is taller...
No need to explain! You don't even sound apologetic!
I'm happy...
...it's...
...just the two of us...
...but...
...I'm a little lonely...
...after all.

Hiro...
...must feel the same way.
And what was that about?
When Daiki told me to behave myself...
...what did he mean?
I don't have to be told to behave!
Did he mean not to go into a frenzy?
Or did he mean not to leave Hiro alone in this house?
No, knowing Daiki it's got to be mean! Was he trying to start a fight? I should've fought back!
Stop making weird faces.
Ah! You noticed I wasn't cleaning!
In order for Hiro to move forward, we can't...

...be thinking...
...about Daiki...
...or how much we miss him.
...
I'll keep this.
And this.
ぐー
zzz
...

Hiro!
You're sleeping? Slacking off?
WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK WHACK
ZZZ
...
I want to touch him.
I want to touch him... I want to touch him!
Even stomping around won't wake him up! I want to touch him!
だんだんっ
THUD THUD

It's no use...
...I guess.
つん POKE
つん POKE
ゴロン
ROLL
ドキドキ
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
He's not waking up.
ペタペタ
STROKE
STROKE

I want to get closer.
ドキ
BA-DUMP
ドキ
BA-DUMP
ばっ
FLING
Stop!
What am I doing?
I'm acting like a crazy pervert!
PULL
...
TWANG
Urgh!
My hair! Get off Hiro's button!
もぞもぞ
SLINK SLINK

Wh...
What is Mao doing?
You're heavy...
Is she trying to undress me? Should I wake up?
No... It's Mao, so she must be up to no good.
My hair!
PULL
PULL
Hey...! Do you know how hard this is for me...?
I see... The heavens must be trying to test my reason right now.
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
Got it! I did it! I got it!
Don't move, you idiot!
Clear your mind, me! Reason...
Reason!
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP
BA-DUMP

…
It's strange that he won't wake up.
つん POKE
つん POKE
つん POKE
つん POKE
You idiot!
Mao! You're heavy!
Waah!
Urgh.
ぼす
SLAM

Sor…
Sorry…
BA-DUMP ドキ
It…
It's okay, so just hurry up and get off of me…
BA-DUMP ドキ
BA-DUMP ドキ
BA-DUMP ドキ
Okay.
Reason!
ドキ
BA-DUMP ドキ
BA-DUMP

...
BA DUMP
ドキ
BA DUMP
ドキ
BA DUMP
...
ドキ
ドキ
BA DUMP
BA DUMP
Oh!
Whoa!
This supermarket is cheap! It says it's a special sale!
Why's your voice so weird?
But it's really cheap!
Tissue paper is just *98 yen for five packs.
Toilet paper is just *128 yen for 12 rolls!
A box of detergent is 98 yen!
Limit of two per person!
特価!
98
Wh... what did you say?
It's a limited-time offer, Hiro! At the next station.
Tomorrow, huh...? I'd rather die than miss this!

*approx. 98 cents
*approx. $1.28

Mao!
Good morning!
Good morning, Chi-chan.
School starts again today, huh?
Are you gonna keep your part-time job?
Yeah.
I'm on the evening shift, anyway.
Oh, right! I want to come see you at work!
Sure, when you turn 20 years old.
That's not 'til forever!
So, do you have to work today?
I'm off today. I have to go shopping.

Then I guess you don't have time to go visit an apartment?
I heard it's a good one.
What? An apartment?!
I'll go! It's fine! I'll go shopping afterwards.
Mao, you're too frantic!
Okay, then, I'll give you more info later.
Okay!
...
I wonder what happened with Chi-chan...
...and Oda-kun.
ガラ
SLIDE

Motomiya, come with me.
Huh?
Good morning.
Huh?
I see...
It's about Chi-chan...
Motomiya...

So, you do...
...like me, after all?
What?
Why do you think that?
I don't! You saw the guy I like!
You met him at the movie theater.
Is that really true?

Why would I lie about that?
...
Well, at any rate...
...I haven't accepted it yet!
Wh... what?
Hey!
See you in class!
What?! What about Chi-chan?

Wha...
What's with him?
He's an idiot! He's an idiot, and that's why he's got it all wrong!
All I can do is agree with her...
Chi-chan...
He hasn't responded to me yet.
Not yet.
Don't make that face!
I'm glad you mentioned it.
He's such an idiot.

Even though I knew he liked you, I told him how felt about him.
I knew what I was getting into.
It would hurt more not to say anything.
If only he'd hurry up and reject me!
Or I can't get over him!
Oda-kun really is an idiot...
Don't say it, too.
Huh? Why not?
Oh, that's the property manager.
Hello!
Waah!

Waah!
Waah!
Whoa...
Am I gonna live here?
No way!
The lock on the door is too dangerous! There isn't even a chain!
And you can't live on the first floor!
Are there any other places?
Other places?
I'll get my car.
This place is fine, Chi-chan.
No way!

It feels haunted.
Like a dead warrior is about to appear.
A warrior...
Rent is *100,000 yen.
!!
*Approx. $1,000.00
Mmm... Guess that's about how much you'll have to spend.
Yeah...
It's fine, Chi-chan.
After seeing that place today, I can live anywhere.
Of course you can live anywhere.
It's fine if it's dirty, but not if it's dangerous!
I'm the one who found the place, after all.
What would I do if something happened to you?
Let's be patient and keep looking.

Okay.
Thanks.
Oh...
You're going to need a parent's signature on the lease.
I see...
If I tell them I want my own place...
...I'm sure they'll be happy to sign.
Sorry... I have to meet up with Hiro to go grocery shopping.
You meant "groceries" when you said shopping?
Yeah... It's a limited-time sale. The prices are unbelievable!

You're buying groceries together?
You two are like romantic newlyweds. ♡
There's a limit of two per person!
No need to make excuses.
How nice... I want to do something romantic, too.
I wonder if you'll be telling me you kissed or that you went all the way soon! You're so lucky!
Wh-wh-wh-what did you say? Chihiro!
I...I'm sorry.
ぜ ぜ PANT WHEEZE PANT WHEEZE
Were you waiting long?
Uh... You look really angry...
PISSED

I'm not angry.
Then what's that face for?
And why do you look ready to pick a fight?
There's only you, Hiro.
What?
I came up with a plan.
What is it?
We each grab two baskets on the way in.
We start by getting daily commodities that are on sale.
Then we move on to the food items.
It's just the two of us, so we can't get greedy.
Quickly fill the baskets with the heavy stuff first.
Got it. Got it.
Whaaa!
What's wrong?
Holding hands isn't allowed!
Sorry.
It's a habit.
What's with that habit, anyway?!
Um, sorry.

セール
SALE
セール
DETERGENT
1.1kg
ガシャ
CLUNK
ガシャ
CLUNK
Last two!
ダッ
DASH
ガバッ
TUG
DETERGENT
1.1kg
Oh, I'm sorry!
But I'm not backing off!
I'm sorry, too.

Mao-chan?
ペコ
NOD
Wait!

I want to...
...talk a little.
Ha ha ha ha ha!
That's a funny face.

Do it again! Do it again!
Again? My face is getting sore.
HA キャっ
HA きゃっ
It's been a long time, Mao-chan.
How long has it been?
Your dad is doing well.
So you like Nakamura-san, huh?
What?
Wh-why?!
It's fine. There's no need to hide it.

I'm glad I finally got to talk to you.
You know, Mao-chan...
I'd like it if you came back to live with us.
Let's become a real family.
I mean, with your dad, too, of course.
Why...
...are you just saying this now?
Now... Yeah... You're right.
I think I didn't have the courage.
But your dad and I want to work on things with you.

Thank you for your concern.
However, I've decided to get a place of my own.
I'll probably call you about that soon.
Excuse me.
Mao-chan!
Mao!

Hey! Hey! Can you do anything else?
Nakamura-san, my apologies. Thank you.
I'm sorry it's taken so long for us to meet.
I am Mao's stepmom.
I'll stop by for an official visit soon.
I intend to have Mao return home.
As embarrassing as this is for us, please take care of Mao.
Huh?
I'm sorry. That was rude. I wasn't expecting you to be such a decent person.
It's natural that you would feel that way.
Don't worry about Mao staying with me. She's a great help to have around.

But...
If you're going to be a family, then please make sure to come get her one day...
The truth is, Mao-san is waiting for you.
I'll do that.
Bye, then.
Until next time.
I'll go find Mao.
Mao!
I finally caught up to you.
Don't leave me with all the bags!

Hiro...
I...
I've been at your place for so long, I forgot.
It hurts...
...not being able to connect...
...with my dad, his wife, and her daughter.
All I do is run away.
Mao, you're doing the best you can.
But, in the end, I'm just hiding out at your place!
Just like right now.

That's why I want to be independent and live on my own!
You'd still be running away from your family, right?
Don't worry.
You can stay at my house until you're able to go back home.
You're still in high school. Your family would prefer that you weren't alone...
But, I...!
I don't want you to take pity on me anymore!
I don't want to be a burden on you.
When Daiki comes back, I'll leave the house...

I want to move past that...
...and have you...
...really see me...
And I want you to be happy!
Mao!
You know, I...!
...
No matter what I say now, she won't listen.

Don't take a fighting stance. Idiot.
Let's go home.
Ground pork and beef was on sale.
I bought a ton, so let's make huge hamburg steak.
...
I told you not buy too much food.
I told you...
I don't think it's right for things to stay the way they are forever.
But at the very least...
...I want to protect you...
...until the day comes when you can go home.

No matter how hard I wish...
...I can never see my parents again.
But you'll be able to face yours again, Mao.
You have people...
...who really care about you, Mao.
Even if it takes time...
You'll go home...
...some day...
...with your head held high.

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One-way Street

Ah! My eyes are so sore!
We've been working overtime every day! I can't take it!
My eyes are so tired, only Loxonin can help!
I know.
Isn't your sister home alone? Is she okay?
You have a thing for sisters, huh?
It's true that I'll be less worried once my brother comes back.
He's living with your uncle?
Yes. But he's planning to move back home soon!
Oh! That's great!
Right?!
Oh! You're unusually fired up!
I wonder which high school Daiki will go to.
There must be a transfer exam.
Hey, Nakamura, Fujita.
Are you going to make the deadline?

We'll make it happen somehow.
If we work overtime.
Make sure you do that.
はっはっはっ Ha ha ha!
Naka-mura.
ガシッ GRAB
What happened after you brought Sugimoto home last time?
Nothing.
What? That's pathetic.
Look at how she's staring at you with desire.
Huh?
ばっ FWIP
Anyone would stare at us whispering like this.
Oh, no, I was fantasizing about them.

Don't say that and just ask Sugimoto-san.
Ah...
The boss is so dowdy. What does he want you to ask Sugimoto-san?
I have no idea.
GLUP
コポ
BUP
コポ
コポ
BUP
The boss definitely has the wrong idea about Sugimoto-san.
He's probably trying to set us up together or something.
Sugimoto-san said she wrote about the guy she likes in her novel.
She wouldn't tell him directly.

Or in fact, Sugimoto san... likes...the boss...?
And the boss actually knows it...?
Excuse me!
モンモン
PANIC
Yes?!
Um...
Nakamura-san.
I apologize for my behavior at the drinking party!
I don't remember much about what happened at the bar...
But you took me home...
Oh, yeah, you told me you like *Mitsuhide Akechi.
Whaaa!

* Mitsuhide Akechi was a samurai and general who lived during the Sengoku period of Feudal Japan.

That's not true!
I like *Masamune Date! I guess he could be mistaken for **Yukimura Sanada, but...
That's not what I meant to say!
Um...
Do you remember your promise?
Um...
You mean about wanting to talk with me?
...
Yes.
There's something I need to tell you, so would you please have dinner with me tonight?

*Masamune Date was a regional strongman during Japan's Azuchi-Momoyama and early Edo period.
**Yukimura Sanada was a Japanese samurai warrior during the Sengoku period.

She seems really serious.
It must not be about history.
Please!
Don't ask me about that!
通話中
TALKING
Don't call about every little thing! You're too particular!
BEEP ピッ
Just do what you want! Idiot!
BZZ プー…
BZZ プー…
Hmph...
I'm sorry, but I've been working overtime a lot lately. If there's a day I can eat dinner with my sister, I want to go home...

I want to talk to you...
...about my novel.
I can only give you my opinion as a fan, is that okay?
Yes.
Please don't think I'm weird. I get so into it that I wonder if I've gone crazy.

Um...
About the novel...
The truth is...
That novel...
Oh!
I can't tell him!

If I tell him, he'll ask why I'm writing it, and I'll have to explain why I lied!
I'll have to tell him I was trying to help Kukai-san...
And that I have a crush on him...
And about Kukai-san's feelings for him, too.
...
I won't be making any new entries.

But it's how I relax...!
When you feel like writing again, please do so. I'll be waiting.
I'm sorry!
I'm truly sorry!
Oh, by the way...
Fujita-san said your brother is moving back home?
Yes, that's correct.
Why does he live with your uncle?
I was still a student when our parents died, so they took him in.
Oh...
...So that's what happened.
Sorry for asking a strange question.

It's not strange.
It would be weirder if you didn't ask.
I had no idea...
...at all...
...how hard...
...it's been for him.
Does that mean he lives alone with Kukai-san?
Can there really be nothing going on?
Kukai-san said that he rejected her.
She's still in high school, so he can't look at her like that...

I want to ask him...
This is delicious.
It really is.
...how the two of them ended up living together.
I want to ask him.
My sister would love this.
I'll try making it sometime.
Mushrooms and garlic...
I want to ask him.
Excuse me!
?
The sister you're living with is Mao-san, right?
ブフォ
SNORT

COUGH
ゴホッ
COUGH
ゴホッ
COUGH
ゴホッ
A...are you okay?
I'm sorry.
Mao told you about it?
ゴホッ
COUGH
Yes... But she never told me the reason, so I wanted to know...
COUGH
ゴホッ
It's compli-cated.
We're childhood friends, so it feels like we're siblings, and it kind of led to this.
...
Sib... lings...
Siblings! I get it!
People are sure to misunderstand, so can you keep it a secret at work?
I'm sorry for asking.

A secret! Between the two of us!
Sure!
Um...
It seems like something happened between you and Mao.
I'm sorry if Mao did anything to cause you trouble.
Not at all.
It's not something I can discuss with a man, though.
I see.
I guess one could say she's easily misunderstood.
Is he...

...apologizing...
...for Kukai-san?
No way...
I feel...
...so...
...jealous.
きゃん YAP
きゃん YAP
I'm home!
きゃん YAP
きゃん YAP
Welcome back.
How was dinner?
It was good. I think you would've liked the food, so I'm gonna try making it for you next time.
Did you eat a proper dinner, Mao?
Yes!
I'm not in grade school, so don't worry about me all the time!

So... What did Sugimoto-san want to talk about?
Huh? She said she isn't writing her novel anymore.
Hmph.
That's all?
Yeah, and... She asked why I live with you.
I was surprised that you told her.
Don't worry, I didn't tell her about your situation.

Hmph.
So he was alone with Radical-san again, huh?
♪
Your lunch looks so good today. Are those mushrooms?
Oh! Chihiro!
Yeah, but...
If Hiro ends up falling for Radical-san...
...it can't be helped.
She's a nice person and would make him happy.
Why am I sneaking by?
Mao! Don't put up a strong front!
CREEP CREEP

Why...
...am I unable to respond to Chihiro?
I've never had trouble rejecting girls before.
Ah...
It's so difficult when two friends fall for the same guy...
...
What's wrong, Chi-chan? You're acting strange!
I was thinking about how Oda thought I liked the same guy as you.
Oh? I told him that my friend likes the same guy, so he must've misunderstood.
I was talking about Radical-san.
は OH!
I wonder if he still has the wrong idea?
He does!

That's why he said that stuff to you!
Put his mind at ease.
You'd be better off clearing up this misunderstanding.
At ease...
Clear it up...
...okay?
Chi-chan.
I don't want to see him get hurt.
I know how it feels to have someone not return your feelings.
All right.

I heard everything.
Oda-kun!
How could you spy on us?!
I just overheard it!
Motomiya, I thought you were holding yourself back for no apparent reason. That's why I didn't get it.
...
I...I'll be going now.
Chi-chan...

JUMP
I just have one question.
That guy I met at the movie theater...
Why are you living with him?
You're not a couple, right?
What?!
You knew?
Sorry.
I went to your place to invite you to the fireworks festival.
To your dad's house, then to that guy's house.
So...
...you talked to my dad?
I don't get along with my new family.
I'm living with Hiro so I can avoid them.

...
Are you ever going to move back home?
I intend to get a place of my own soon.
I see...
I can't say anything special to you, but...
Do the best you can.
I...
...was happy when you said that you like me.
You wanted to make me happy, huh?

I'm sorry if I'm wrong.
I think that's what liking someone is all about.
...
Yeah.
Thank you.
I'm sorry.
Thank you, too, Motomiya.
I guess I was a bit pushy.
ブル SHAKE
ブル SHAKE
ブル SHAKE

It's thanks to you, Oda-kun...
...because you were so straight-forward...
...that I'm able to give it my all.
ざわ RUSTLE
ざわ RUSTLE
ざわ RUSTLE
ざわ RUSTLE
ざわ RUSTLE

Chihiro…
…you're there, right?
…
I'm sorry, Chihiro.
I'm sorry.
I can't think about anything right now.
I'm sorry.

キーン
DING
コーン
DONG
カーン
DANG
コーン
DONG
Even if...
...I were to hug her...
If...
...I wouldn't be able to stop her tears.
For example...

If Hiro were to have a crush on someone...
...and that person...
...turned him down...
...what would I say?
DING
キーン
DONG
コーン
In my case...
DANG
カーン
DONG
コーン
...I would...
...never...
...be able to act like Chi-chan.

Inbox

From Chi-chan

Subject

Sorry, Mao.
Something came up, so I can't walk home with you.
Go on home without me. Sorry.

I'm home! And exhausted!
YAP
キャん
Croquette, were you a good girl? I'm home now.
There, there...
YAP
YAP
YAP
きゃん
きゃん
きゃん

どおおん
GLOOM
What's wrong, Mao?!
Did your own cooking make you sick?!
Did you eat dinner?!
I...had dinner at work...
Hiro...
Oda-kun came to this house, right?
My father told him about you, so you didn't tell me?
Oh. Yeah. Sorry I didn't tell you.
But he left right away.
I wonder why he came in the first place.
Idiot! I told him to keep quiet!
He came to invite me to the fireworks festival.
That's what it was, huh?
All this time...

...he's been telling me that he likes me.
Today, I finally turned him down.
I see. Is that what's got you in this mood?
You gave Oda-kun closure.
That's mean! You monster!
Demon!
This is a normal part of life.
You responded honestly to Oda-kun's feelings, right?
Even though you knew it would hurt him, you didn't run away.
You should be proud.
NOD

Does someone always get hurt when it comes to love?
Don't ask me that with such a straight face!
Straight-forward
Well, you know...
Even if someone gets hurt...
...it's better not to have regrets.
...
Yeah.
But... Chi-chan...
What about Chi-chan?
Nothing! I'll just practice giving her a smile tomorrow as if nothing ever happened.
Hiro, go over there.
Talking with you makes me feel like a child.
Feel like a child? You are a child.
Be quiet! Hurry up and go away!

YANK
YANK
I'm glad you feel better.
Oda-kun can move on, now.
Ouch!
Any guy would want to see his crush smile.
Yeah.
That's how I feel, too.

ブブブ
BZZ BZZ BZZ
ブブブ
BZZ BZZ BZZ BZZ
びくっ
JOLT
びくっ
JOLT
Who...
Hiro?
BZZ ブ BZZ ブ BZZ ブ
It's Daiki.
Since I'm planning to move back home, I'm going to be coming back for the transfer exams once the paperwork is in.
Oh! Did you decide which school you want to go to? Are you worried about the transfer exams?
Just so you know, anywhere will gladly accept me knowing the school I'm currently attending.
Is that so...?
Haughty as usual.
Contact me when you know the exact date.

I'll go back for the exam, but I won't stop by the house.
Why not? Mao wants to see you.
I do! I do! I want to see you!
That's overenthusiastic.
Oh, right... Wanna talk to him, Mao?
Yes!
Yoo-hoo, Daiki!
What's with the "Yoo-hoo"?
What do you want to say to me?
Nothing really.
Okay, then, I guess I'll hang up.
Hey! But I haven't talked to you in a long time!
Bye.
BEEP
He hung up...
I should've told him you were mistreating me.
Hold on.
That doesn't even sound like a joke.

Mao.
I don't think it'll be long until Daiki moves back.
I think you should put off moving out on your own.
...
That again.
Yup.
I've been thinking about it.
I think you should try talking with your parents again.
And include your mom, too.

Dai-chan.
What did Hiro say?
Nothing special.
It'll be lonely here without you.
Come back anytime, okay?
Yeah, thanks, Auntie.
Of course.
So, is the reason...
...you suddenly decided to move back...

...because you like a girl over there?
No way! Don't be ridiculous!
Oh, my...
Oh, my...
Oh, my...
Oh, my...
GULP
You thought you could hide it from me?
I knew it, Dai-chan.

To be continued...

EXTRA CHAPTER Fireworks and Boys

I can't go to the fireworks festival.
My parents are coming home late tonight. I have to watch the house.
I have to be home when it gets dark out.
I see...
Magyo, what do you do when you're all alone at home?
Don't call me Magyo!
Isn't that your name?
No way!
I study and read.
Also, I'm writing a novel.
HMPH
フッ
I'm smart.
A... novel?
I want to read it.
Be quiet! Go home already!

I'm back.
Welcome back.
Welcome back!
What did Mao-chan say?
Wow.
So pretty.
She can't go.
I told her we're leaving at 6:00 PM and to come along if she feels like it.
But she said she has to stay home.
Is Mao-chan alone at home? I should've asked her parents if we could take her with us.
Hiro! What do you think? What do you think?
You're so cute.
Thanks! I love the obi ribbon!
BOOM
B-BOOM

Wow! It's beautiful!
ドーン
BOOM
It's beautiful! It's beautiful!
I'm happy we could finally come as a family.
ドーン
BOOM
Hiro. Did you break up with your girlfriend?
I hope you can come with your girlfriend next year.
ドーン
BOOM
Be quiet!
...
Hiro.
Are you worried about Mao-chan?
Huh?
Um...
I just really...
...don't like her parents.

Let's invite Mao-chan ahead of time next year.
Okay?
BOOM
Oh?
That doesn't sound like something you'd say.
B-BOOM
I'm stuck with you guys again next year?
The year after next, then.
That's not the issue!
It'll be fun to all come together, even if you have a girlfriend.
No way!
Hiro...
BOOM
You're always worrying about other people.
I love that about you.

Please have some fun now.
Okay...
BOOM
Wh...what is this?

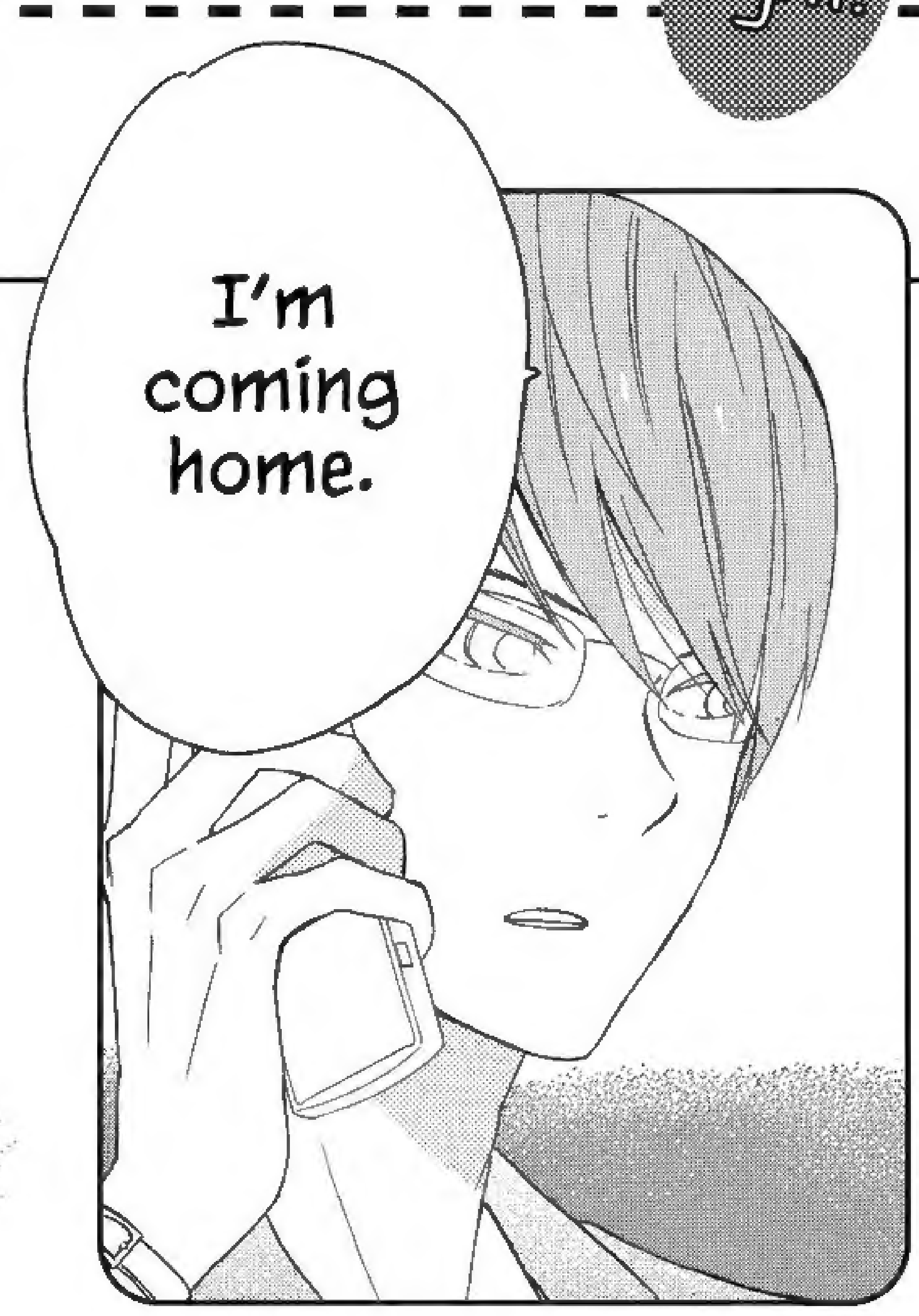
Cotton candy from the festival.
You don't want it?
You shouldn't return presents.
I see.
My mom wants you to join us next year.
We'll ask your parents.
What?
I want...
I want...
I want to go! Not!
Which is it?

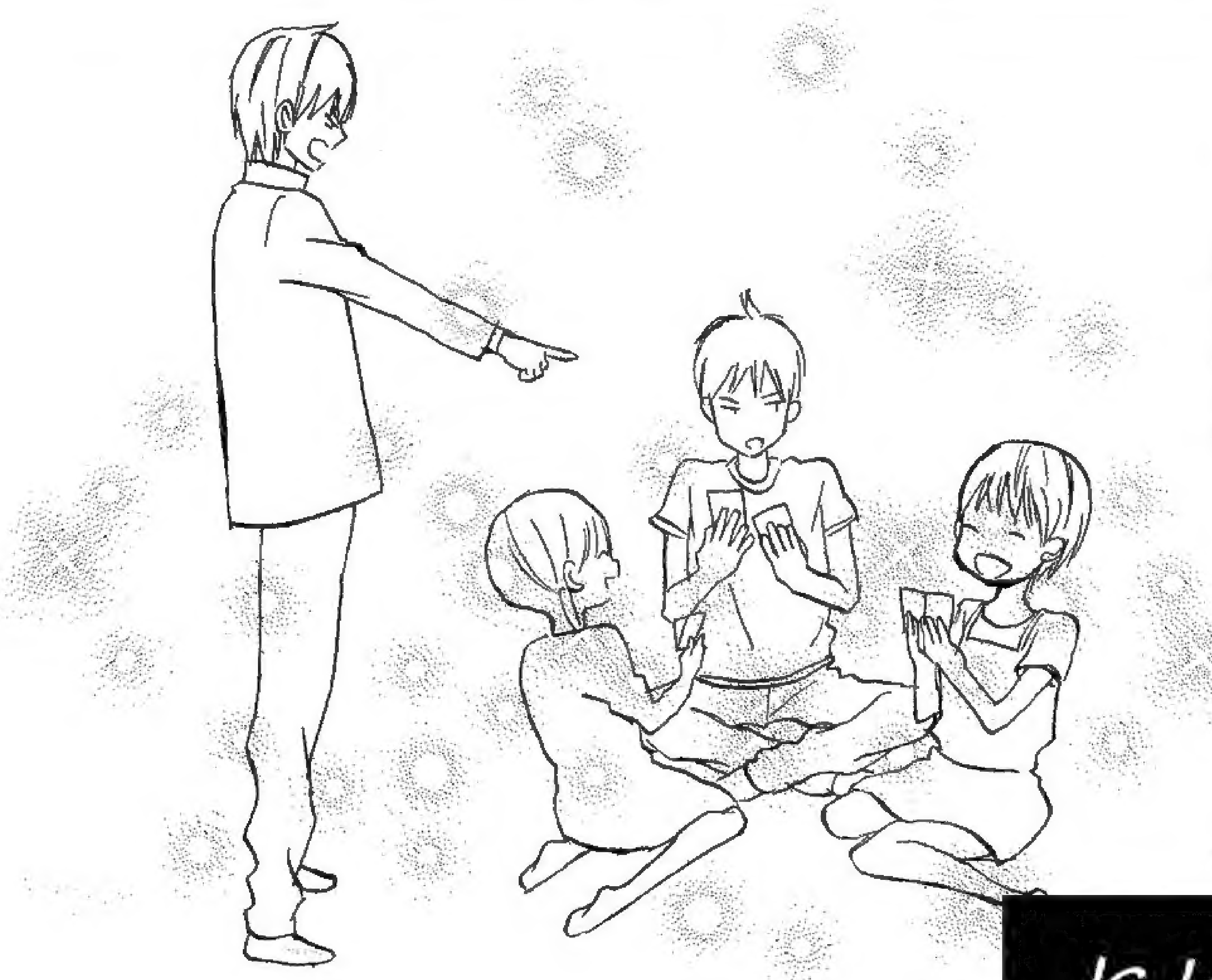
End of extra chapter

Next volume Announcement

All right!

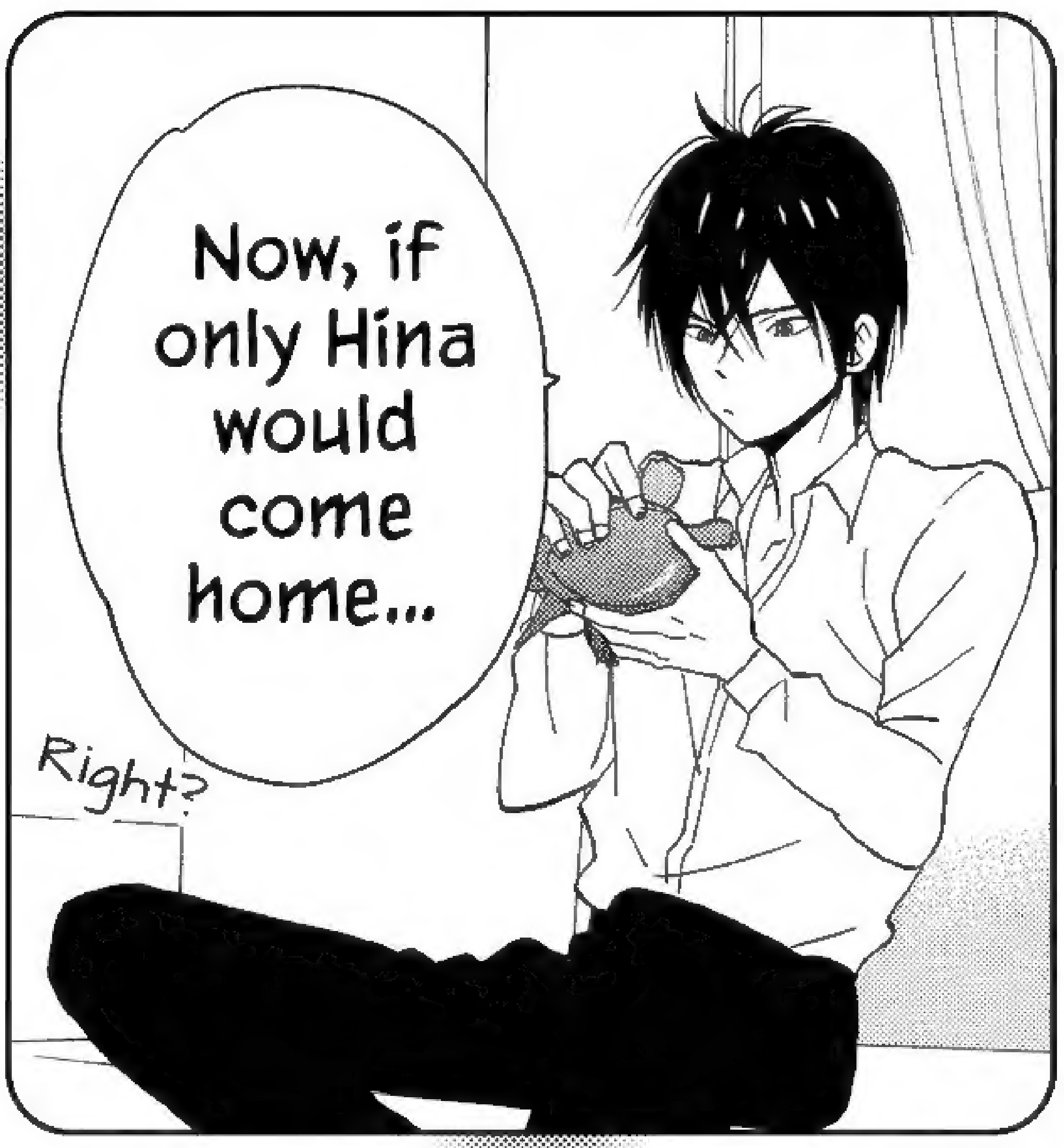
Daiki finally comes home.


I'm coming home.

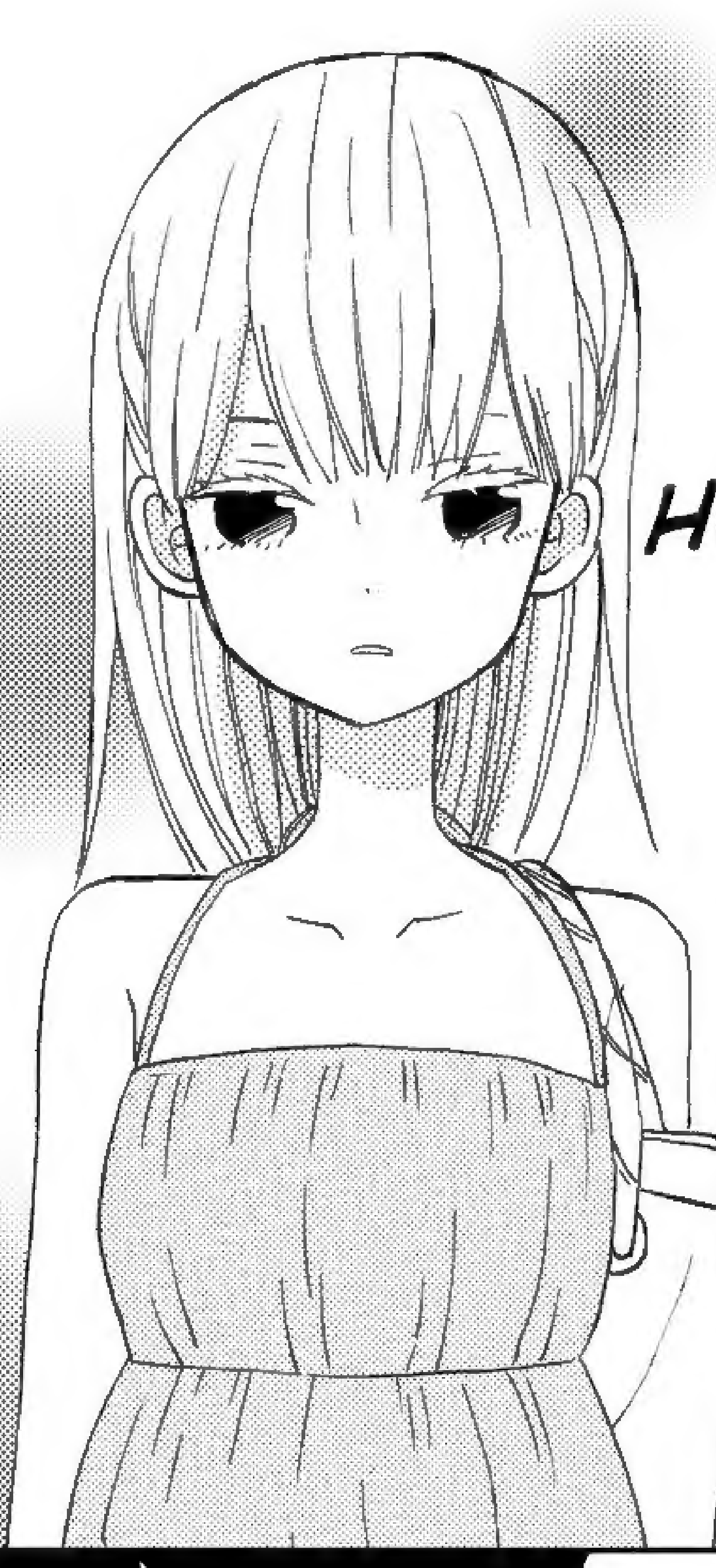


"I want all of us to laugh together again."

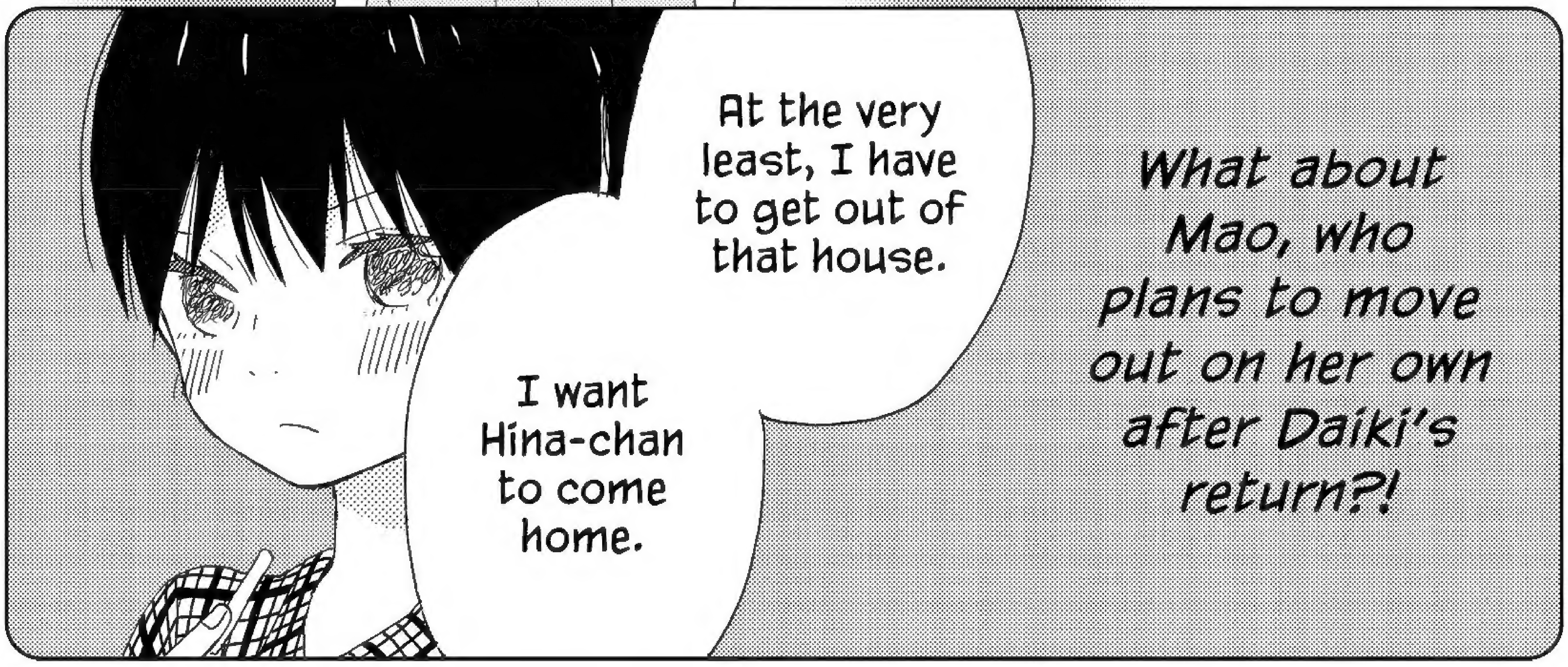
Is Hiro getting what he wished for...?


Now, if only Hina would come home...
Right?

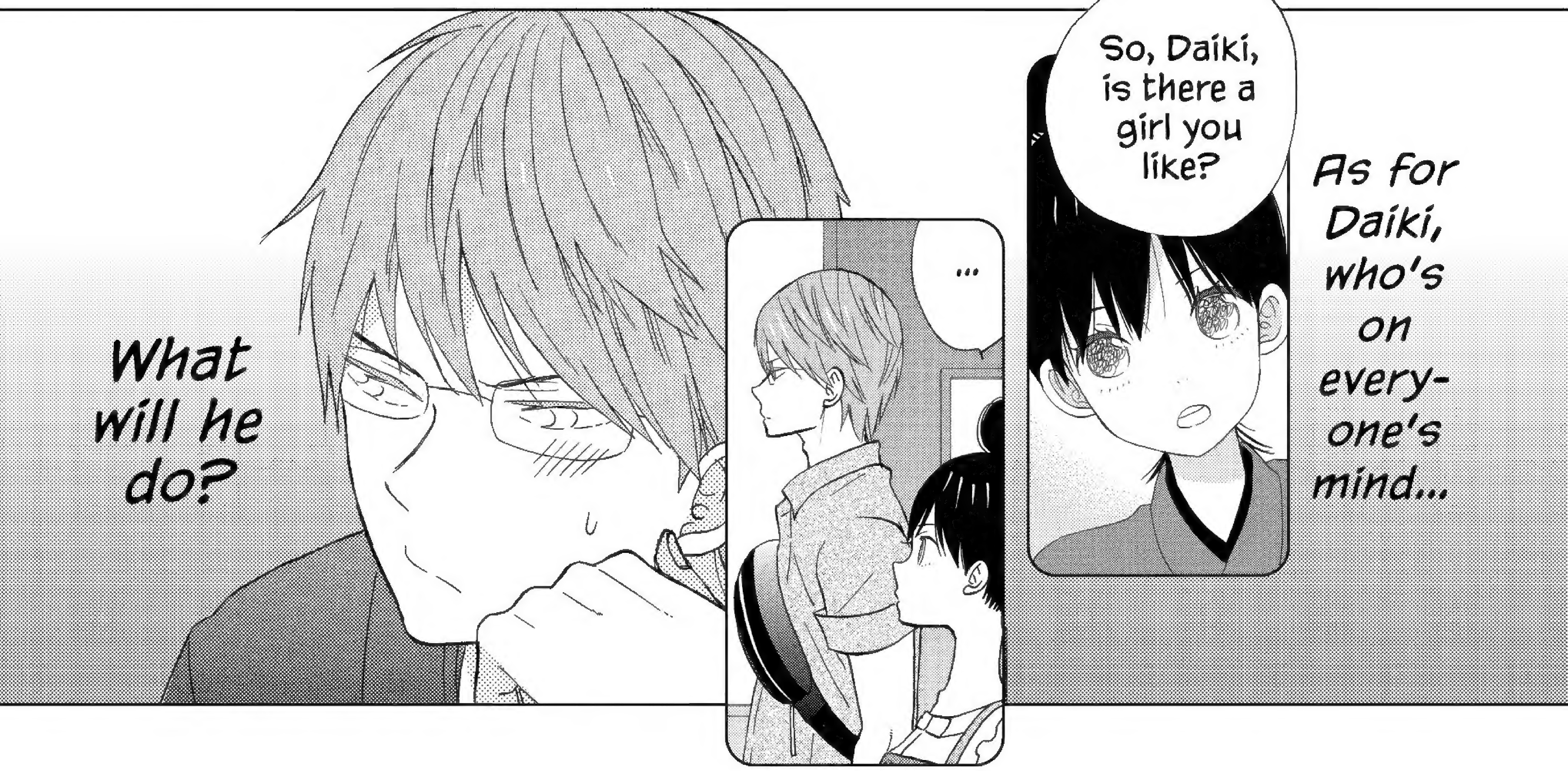
However...

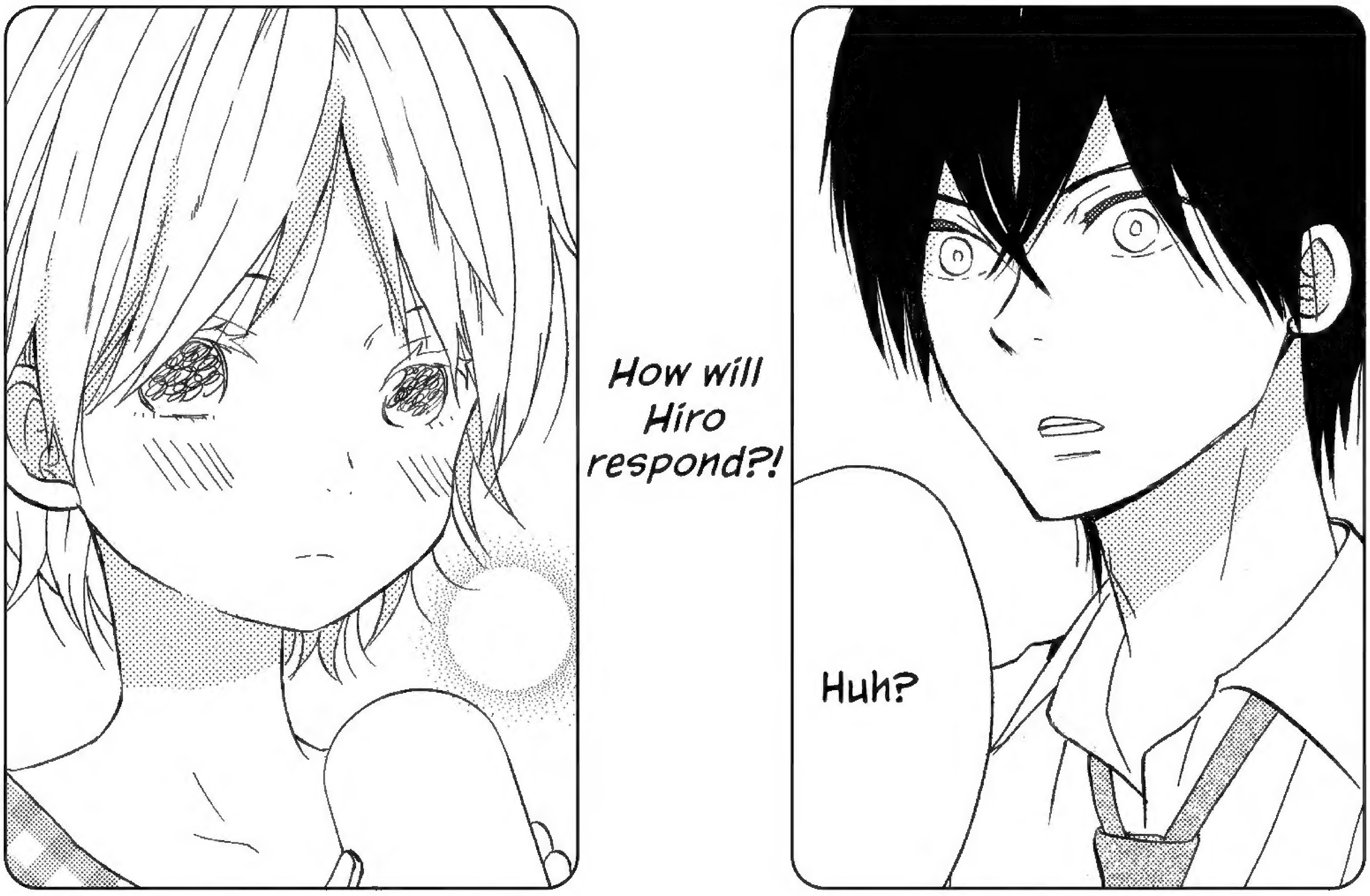


Hina ends up...


At the very least, I have to get out of that house.
I want Hina-chan to come home.

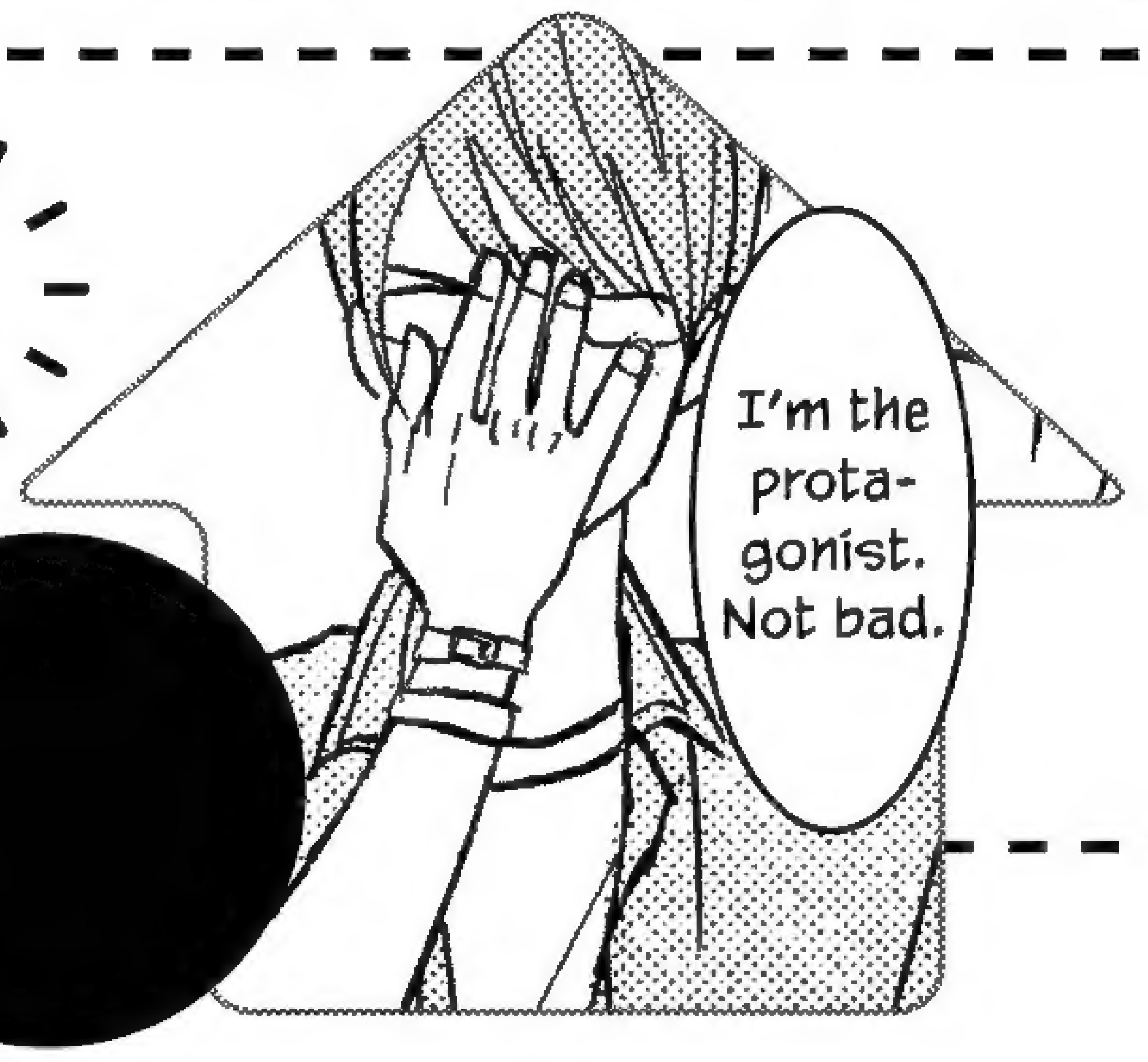
What about Mao, who plans to move out on her own after Daiki's return?!


As for Daiki, who's on everyone's mind...
So, Daiki, is there a girl you like?
...
What will he do?


Sugimoto-san is moving forward more seriously...
Huh?
How will Hiro respond?!

You won't be able to put down Volume Six!

HOUSE of the SUN 6


I'm the protagonist. Not bad.

House of the Sun 5

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